

SENATE RESOLUTION 301

By Wilder

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Louise Degrafinried for her great courage and heroic actions.

WHEREAS, over much of its history, Tennessee has been known as the Volunteer State because it has been the home of so many valiant men, women, and children who have responded with great courage and strength of character in times of trouble and adversity, whether in war or peace; and

WHEREAS, one such outstanding Volunteer was Louise Degrafinried of Somerville, who, on February 21, 1984, acted with courage and fortitude to assist authorities in the apprehension of an escaped prisoner; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Degrafinried, seventy-three years old at the time, was in her home that fateful morning when the fugitive Riley Arzeneaux, a convicted murderer who had escaped from Pillow State Prison and had evaded authorities' pursuit for days, stormed into the house, brandishing a shotgun and threatening to kill the Degrafinrieds; and

WHEREAS, exhibiting the greatest degree of composure, Louise Degrafinried responded to the threat with only immense hospitality; after requesting that Mr. Arzeneaux place his weapon on the sofa, she gave him dry socks for his cold, wet feet and proceeded to cook a hearty breakfast for the intruder; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Degrafinried then sat down to eat with her visitor and held his hand to say a prayer, offering the fugitive the same kindness and love she would have offered an old friend; and

WHEREAS, because Louise Degrafinried had terminated a phone call abruptly when Riley Arzeneaux entered the home, police were soon apprised of the fugitive's presence and surrounded the Degrafinried residence; Mrs. Degrafinried first approached the police and convinced them to keep their weapons holstered, and then she calmly escorted Mr. Arzeneaux to one of the police cars so that he could be returned to prison; and

WHEREAS, after the ordeal, Louise Degrafinried, a woman of unwavering faith and a devout member of the Mt. Sinai Primitive Baptist Church, maintained correspondence with Riley Arzeneaux, developing a relationship that helped the prisoner become a Christian in 1988; Mr. Arzeneaux even served as a pallbearer at her funeral in 1998; and

WHEREAS, the love, tenderness, and mercy that were so central to Mrs. Degrafinried's character had a profound impact on not only Riley Arzeneaux but all those who knew her, including her husband, Nathon, and her children, Joyce, Luskey, and Ida; she also touched the life of her son, Nathon, Jr., who preceded her in death; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and just that this exceptional citizen should be recognized and commended for acting with such bravery and honor in the face of potential tragedy and for the impeccable character she exhibited throughout her lifetime; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby honor the memory of Louise Degrafinried for her courage and composure in the face of danger, commend her for her selfless actions, and offer our thanks for a difficult job well done.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.